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HOW TO KILL THOSE DEGENERATE BRAINY ALIENS, 1900-STYLE

An appreciation of George Griffith's "Stories of Other Worlds"

Martin S. Kottmeyer

FEW of the popular writers working at the start of the 20th century are remembered today apart from H.G. Wells and Jules Verne. Of them, George Griffith's career could be regarded as having taken the greatest fall. He was among the most prolific of writers and probably made more money in his career than H.G. Wells, a matter that exasperated Wells in some measure since Griffith seemed clearly his inferior. He made his mark mainly for writing stories about future wars, a common theme of late 1800s fiction. (1) He also delved into travellers' tales, lost races, and historical novels. Critics dismiss him as unimaginative yet he had a gift for combining elements from other writers into a more lavish form. (2) Griffith occasionally did work we now term science fiction and if anything of his can be said to have survived it is his serial work "Stories of Other Worlds," first run in *Pearson's Magazine* from January to June in 1900 and later expanded into book form as *A Honeymoon in Space*. (3)

Brian Stableford remarks that the materials for the story seem all secondhand and Griffith was entirely upfront that he was familiar with the writings of Camille Flammarion, the famous astronomer and author. They act as touchstones for what is unsurprising in what the space travellers find in their tour around the solar system. The premise is that an airship has been outfitted with a device that utilises a newly identified R-Force, which is the inverse of gravity in the same sense that magnetism can be used both in attraction and repulsion. The builder, his new wife, and an engineer take the new vessel, *Astronef* or the *Star-Navigator*, on a grand adventure to



Zadie took a step backwards and pulled the trigger

explore several worlds of the solar system.

Overall, Griffith's journey is as much a journey through time as through space. The places they visit are explicitly based on then-existing theories about Earth's past ages and humanity's likely future. Jupiter is "a World that Is to Be"; a thundering mass of roiling lava - a fire-ocean planet like Earth before the crust had formed. Part of Saturn is regarded as in the Age of Reptiles and we see cave-men. Mars is a dying desert world displaying a degenerative future evolution. Though drying up, it still has large populations of beings embroiled in the struggle of survival of the fittest. On Ganymede, water is even more precious and hoarded with life surviving in crystal

hothouses. Intellect has eliminated competition. The survivors are beings of Greek-god excellence: well-bred manners, civilised and handsome.

On our moon, water is nearly gone. The air went away quickly because of the low gravity. Lungs became huge, evolving to gather the last breaths of the air. Civilisation followed the shores of the shrinking seas. The crumbling bones of one population surround a temple. Elsewhere on our moon, a sea still remained in which a remnant of humans had adapted. What remained was a parody of a human: a big, round, smooth head; but eyeless and having a mouth like a fish. It had a smooth livid grey skin, presumably a convergence paralleling dolphins. In place of fingers it had feelers that waved about as an adaptation to water life. Europa, one of Jupiter's moons, had passed through all evolutionary stages and "had lapsed into the icy silence of death".

Venus is anomalous in this evolutionary scheme. The vast dense atmosphere and high mountains led to the evolution of bird/humans. They are regarded as angels by the travellers and the metaphor is further exploited by having them communicate by song. We even see that they are without sin and the earthlings fear they may accidentally play the role of serpent in this Eden/Heaven. Given their murder on Mars, this looks unavoidable. There is undoubtedly some building upon mythology here. Venus is the goddess of love. On Mars, the travellers had been forced into war per the bloody Roman god it was named after. It is felt by Brian Stableford that the notion of a sinless Venus derives from W.S. Lach-Szyrma's cosmic voyage *Alerial*



Hairless brainy unisex aliens - a first contact.

(1883). Doubtless too obvious to be any surprise to present-day readers, this Venus as Heaven idea got things exactly wrong. Venus is now regarded as the modern version of Hell with temperatures measured in hundreds of degrees.

One other partial departure from the space/time analogy is the equatorial region of Saturn which has a thick atmosphere inhabited by creatures resembling "exaggerated jellyfish" and whale monsters.

The part of the serial devoted to the trip to Mars inevitably draws the greatest interest to the history-minded reader. On initial approach, the image of Mars follows Flammarion in seeing Mars as very worn down. There are no mountains, only sluggish rivers draining into marshes. The travellers wonder if civilisation will also have worn out, "degenerating into a struggle for sheer existence" as they saw on Earth's moon. Upon entering the atmosphere the travellers encounter a fleet of airships and are bombarded by poison gas cylinders, but since the *Astronef* was airtight for space flight this does them no harm. After ramming and breaking up vessels with the *Astronef's* superior speed and hardness, the Martian fleet backs down. The *Astronef* lands and we meet the Martians.

"Swarms of human figures, but of more than human stature, clad in tunics

and trousers or knickerbockers, came out of the glass-domed palaces from all sides into the park. They were nearly all the same stature and there appeared to be no difference between the sexes." Their dress was absolutely plain. If there were women they were the same size.

Then they notice, "Why, they're all bald! They haven't got a hair among them - and what a size their brains are." Leading to the retort, "That's brains - too much brains, I expect! These people have lived too long. I expect they've ceased to be animals, civilised themselves out of everything in the way of passions and emotions, and are just purely intellectual beings, with as much human nature about them as a limited company has."

The lady comments, "They're very ugly aren't they? And really you can't tell which are men and which are women. I suppose they've civilised themselves out everything that's nice, and are just scientific and utilitarian and everything's that's horrid." Also, "their faces were all the same, with features of mathematical regularity, pale skin, bloodless cheeks, and an expression, if such it could be called, utterly devoid of emotion."

One of the Martians approaches and takes too great an interest in the explorer's new wife. His big, pale eyes devour her loveliness and something like human passion arises in his eyes. He is huge, 9-foot tall and hideous and he approaches her. Lacking a common language they can't get across a proper warning as he outstretches his arms. She fires her gun. "The bullet cut a clean hole through the smooth, hairless skull of the Martian." Bad luck. They toss the body overboard and haul tail out of there.

That this is basically rooted in H.G. Wells's logic of the form of future man seems clear enough in the loss of emotions combined with the big bald heads. The influence of Spencer has also been seen in Griffith's tale, but it is probably not sufficient for this particular point since Spencer did not propose such a loss of emotions, preferring instead an increase of sensitivity and improved ethical natures in future man. The point about the males and females looking

indistinguishable is derivative of Alpheus Hyatt's concerns, voiced first in 1866, that the degeneration of humanity was becoming evident in how women were becoming too like men in appearance. The tallness of the Martian is a common trait in extraterrestrial fictions as has been observed in the context of the aliens of the airship mania of the late 1890s.

The tale itself ends dramatically in an encounter with a dead star that depletes the R-force and necessitates a fall to the Sun. Via tricky gravitational perturbations with various bodies of the inner solar system the *Astronef* barely finds its way home. The science seems pretty flimsy in this final peril and suggests Griffith's grasp of the science of the time was spotty, guided mainly by the better popularisers - a matter partially understandable from his background as a journalist.

Stableford has remarked that the unoriginality of the tale paradoxically makes Griffith's story seem like an archetypal scientific romance. It is an agglomeration of Jules Verne adventure conventions pulling imagery and ideas from prior cosmic voyages by Flammarion, Wells, Lach-Szyrma, and Edgar Fawcett. It provided the opportunity for probably the earliest manifestations of an alien drawn as having both a big and bald head in the illustrations for the serial in *Pearson's* by Stanley Wood. (4) How influential it was in starting this artistic convention can be debated. Griffith was popular in his day, but the logic underlying the future course of evolution expressed in the more enduring works of H.G. Wells has to be more important in making it traditional, and, eventually, stereotypical.

It can't be denied the most enjoyable aspect of Stanley Wood's illustrations is the sight of this proto-Grey being killed off by a bullet to the brain, directed there by an earth lady's pistol. It seems fair to label this a premiere event. It is a fate for this stock villain that would be recycled in different forms throughout the whole 20th century. Such brainy beings were killed off right and left by means as varied as the snapping of necks, being stomped on, blown up by dynamite, smashed by axes, doused in acid, liquid oxygen, fried by ray guns, and even eaten alive by brain leech bio-weapons. Ah, the pleasures of nostalgia.

Notes

1. I.F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984*, Oxford University Press, 1966
2. Brian Stableford, *Scientific Romance in Britain 1890-1950*, St. Martin's Press, 1985, pp. 44-55
3. George Griffith, "Stories of Other Worlds", *Pearson's Magazine*, January - June 1900. Illustrations by Stanley Wood, 1899. Reprinted in A Kingsley Russell, ed., *Science Fiction by the Rivals of H.G. Wells*, Castle Books, April 1979, pp. 115-188.
4. An 1864 illustration of a space mummy for Henri de Parville's newspaper hoax *An Inhabitant of Planet Mars* has a Martian that is bald, but not overtly big headed. The baldness should be presumed to be a product of desiccation of the corpse, evident in other features like the eyes having dried into nothingness and muscles having shrunken down.

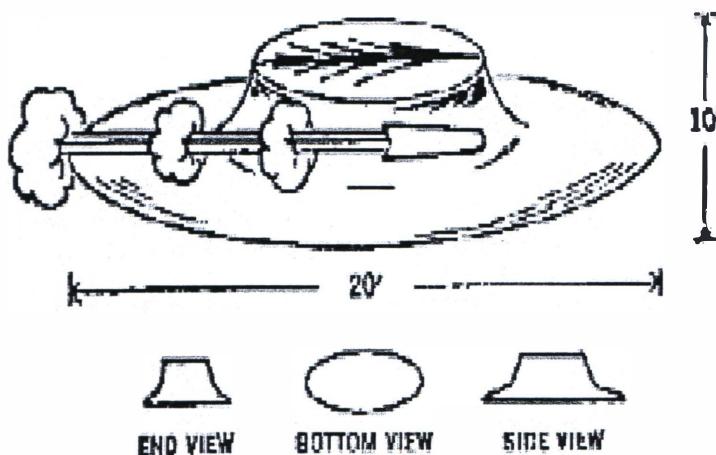
TWIN FALLS, IDAHO, 1947

Some notes on a classic UFO report by Martin S. Kottmeyer

Snake River Canyon, 13 August 1947

A.C. Urie & sons Keith, 8, and Billy, 10.

L.W. Hawkins, Twin Falls County Commissioner & former sheriff



EDITORIAL

The recent report of unidentified objects or phenomena tracked by a Mexican air force plane while on a routine mission searching for drug smugglers caused a great deal of confusion among ufologists, especially the more excitable ones.

The incident occurred on 5 March 2004 and was released in May, not to scientists or to the news media generally but to a certain larger-than-life journalist and ufologist, Jaime Maussan.

When the Mexican secretary of defence was asked why he had chosen Maussan, he said that Maussan was a person "who has been interested all his life" in the study of UFOs and that he had not given the data and video to scientists "perhaps because we do not know them or know who they might be."

Various explanations were suggested to account for the incident, but very few of the silly ones were offered by ufologists. The ones worth further study were somewhat technical, leaving the sceptics waiting for more precise details and the believers fearful that a convincing explanation would be found, despite their desire for it to remain a mystery.

Primary documents:

Just as Magic Valley and the nation were starting to let go of lamp posts after reeling under a welter of flying saucer reports, two more Twin Falls County men revived speculation on the mystery with vivid descriptions of the discs they saw.

From A.C. Urie, who operated Auger Falls Trout Farm six miles west of Blue Lake Ranch in Snake River Canyon, came perhaps the most detailed account of the fast flying object the nation has yet produced.

The flying saucer Urie saw was skimming through Snake River Canyon at a height of about 75 feet at 1 P.M. Wednesday. At 9:30 A.M. the same day, L.W. Hawkins, Twin Falls County Commissioner and former county sheriff from Filer, also saw two circular objects soaring along at a great height near Salmon Dam, twenty mile southwest of Twin Falls.

Here is Urie's eyewitness descriptions of the flying disks seen by him and his sons, Keith, 8, and Billy, 10: "I obtained a close-up view of the flying saucer as it passed by the trout farm at 1 P.M. August 13, down Snake River Canyon at a height of about 75 feet from the canyon floor. I would estimate the speed at about 1,000 miles per hour." Urie explained that the incident occurred while the two boys were coming across the river from the north side in a boat. He had become concerned about what was delaying them and had walked down toward the river to see if they were all right. "I had a side view at a distance of 300 feet and almost on a level with the thing," Urie continued. "Two of my boys, Keith and Billy,

were below me and they also saw it at about a 45-degree angle. They both got a bottom and a side view, and we were all looking at it from the south side of the canyon... It was all one colour, sort of a light sky blue with a red tubular fiery glow at the side of the top, or hood," Urie continued. "The canyon floor is rough at that particular point and it rode up and down over the hills and hollows indicating some type of control faster than the reflexes of man. It is my opinion that it is guided by instruments and must be powered by atomic energy as it made very little noise, just a s-w-i-s-h as it passed by." Urie described the size as about 20 feet long by 10 feet high and 10 feet wide, giving it an oblong shape. It might be described as looking like an inverted pie plate or a broad-brimmed straw hat that had been compressed from two sides. Pressed for his candid opinion of just what it was, Urie said he was convinced that there was something to this flying saucer situation. "I know a number of people who have also seen them and I know they're just imagining something or trying to get their names in the paper," Urie commented. "I do know that it scared the boys and made me feel pretty uneasy," he added.

Tracing down a rumour that County Commissioner Hawkins had seen an unusual object in the air on the same day as Urie's experience, *The Times-News* called him at his Filer home. "Yes, I did," he replied, without hesitation. "I'll have to admit I've been sceptical all along until I saw it with my own eyes. I can't say what it was but I say there's something in the air." Hawkins related that while at Salmon Dam Wednesday morning a

sound resembling the echo of a motor caused him to look upward and there he saw two circular objects that reflected light. They were travelling at a great speed and higher than most airplanes, according to Hawkins. Aside from this he declined to add details, except to say, "There's something in the air." His general description, however, corresponded closely to those hundreds of persons who reported seeing flying saucers

John Brosman, *Times-News* (Twin Falls, Idaho), August 15, 1947. in J. Allen Hynek, *Hynek UFO Report*, Dell, 1977, pp. 34-6.

As the machine went by the Urie place, the trees over which it had almost directly passed (Mormon poplar) did not just bend with the wind as if a plane had gone by but in Urie's words, spun around on top as if they were in a vacuum.

Keith Urie, eight years of age, said he first saw the machine coming down the canyon, heading from east to west and following the contours of the ground. Billy, ten, saw it almost immediately. Both watched it fly out of sight in a matter of moments. They said they ran to their father and learned that he too had seen the machine.

Urie seemed completely sincere about the incident. He said his wife and daughter were in the house at the time and had not seen the machine. He questioned his brother, who also lives in the canyon, but his brother was eating at the time and had seen nothing. Urie and his two boys maintained that they had never before seen one of the discs. Urie, when interviewed, appeared to be a sober, middle-aged man. John Brosman, The *Times-News* reporter who originally furnished Special Agents with information about the incident, likewise stated that Urie appeared completely sincere about the machine.

No further attempt was made to locate [two other men who repeatedly had seen the object] inasmuch -----, who was with ----- was supposed to have working in Twin Falls.

Blue Book statement, J. Allen Hynek, *Hynek UFO Report*, Dell, 1977, pp. 34-6.

"...had sent his sons to the river for some tops from his boat. As they were overdue he went to look for them, when he noticed some three hundred feet away some 75 feet in the air a sky-blue object silhouetted against the steep walls of the [Snake River] canyon on the far side. The canyon is about 400 feet deep and 1200 feet across at this point. The object was travelling 75 feet in the air (300 feet below the rim of the canyon) and so was plainly visible. - states that the sky-blue color would probably not be noticed against the sky. He states that 'It did not spin like a top.' However, he did say that the trees over which it passed almost directly did not just bend with the wind as if a

plane had gone by but that they 'spun around on top as if they were in a vacuum.' (Air Force emphasis)

Keith ---, a son, eight years of age said he saw the machine coming down the canyon heading from east to west and following the contours of the ground. Billy, age ten, another son, saw it almost immediately. Both watched it fly out of sight behind a tree in a matter of moments.

Blue Book File #75 block quote in Loren Gross, *UFOs: A History: volume 1: July 1947-December 1948*, p. 28.

Gross adds outside the block quote that the children saw daylight through the exhaust flames and it was smokeless unlike the implication of the puffs in the exhaust made in the drawing. He also noted the *Times News* referred to the incident as a 'vision' of a 'saucer-jet.'

Michael Hall & Wendy Connors report that Jan Aldrich did research adding that the FBI checked out all the witnesses and gave them and Urie a very good recommendation.

[Michael D. Hall & Wendy A. Connors, *Alfred Loedding & the Great Flying Saucer Wave of 1947*, Rose, 1998, p. 106.]

Significance:

Case IX, Blue Book Special Report #14: Battelle Memorial Institute study Project Blue Book Files, Case 80 [Incident 75 in 1947 documents (H&C, p. 106)]

Hynek blithely dismissed it as "a rapidly travelling atmospheric eddy?" when he first studied it, but he confessed it was unlike any ever described and later haunted him. He indicated in *The Hynek UFO Report* (1977) he maybe should have concluded, "This was indeed a strange craft, involving technology far beyond ours." It was also similar to many other reports of the recent past. He lacked prestige and knew higher Pentagon officials would dismiss him, so he waited for a perfect case - but it never came. p. 38)

"Another classical case is the Twin Falls, Idaho incident of August 13: A blue 'disk' was alleged seen flying at very low altitude above a forest, and trees were said to bend below it as under a violent wind"

Jacques Vallee, *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*, Ace Star, 1965, p. 91.

Michael Hall and Wendy Connors rate it an "above average daylight disc sighting of summer 1947" showing the noteworthy high frequency of 'nuts & bolts' type cases. (H&C, p. 106)

Jenny Randles *UFO Reality* cites it as her first

example of UFOs interacting with the environment. The trees indicate a force-field shell.

Mark Cashman's Temporal Doorway website has a page devoted to the case and offers the comment/conclusion: "A classic physical effect case."

It is omitted in most histories, but there is sporadic interest by specialists in the early history of the subject: Loren Gross, Jan Aldrich, Hall & Connors

Problems:

1,000 mph speed estimate, yet "made very little noise, just a s-w-i-s-h as it passed by" There should be a sonic boom.

The trees over which it had almost directly passed did not just bend with the wind as if a plane had gone by but spun around on top as if they were in a vacuum. If it is jet-powered as suggested by side-pods and exhaust, why should there be spinning trees underneath?

The volunteered opinion it must be powered by atomic energy is pure non sequitur. Given the period, though, this can be a fashionable allusion to exaggerate significance and dramatize technological superiority. This superiority was not necessarily extraterrestrial, but could be based in either Soviet rumors or the idea of an American technological connection to the Hanford facility, several dozen miles downstream on the Snake River. This could be a possible sign of over-enthusiasm.

Standard problem of absence of similar cases:

i.e.

Probably Unique: the placing of the jet pod & flame exhaust off the side of the turret; the insignia along the spine of the object
Infrequent: the sky blue colour, the hugging of land contour, and the trees spinning.
This uniqueness contributes to the problem of inconsistency spanning all the quality cases of the Battelle study.

Hawkins's report is not convincingly corroborative: he saw two objects rather than one, saw them at great altitude rather than low and skimming the contours, and heard a motor sound despite the high altitude while closer Urie heard only a swish.

Agent notes that there may have been two other people willing to corroborate, but one who was said to have repeatedly seen the object was away fishing and the other was away working in Twin Falls. It seems a measure of the perfunctory nature of Sign's investigation that so little effort was made to

acquire corroborative statements that they would not travel the small distance to Twin Falls. Maybe they felt rushed or the story failed to impress them on some level.

Keyhoe thought the case "curious" (p. 27) and remarked the sky-blue colour was "one interesting difference from the usual description." (p. 80) He tried to discount it as maybe due to the sky reflecting off its gleaming surface and the angle of vision. He reports two miners saw two brightly gleaming disks circling at high speed at Salmon Dam that same day, but they were drawn to it by an odd roaring sound

Caveat: drawing by Vic Goertzen of Twin Falls *Times-News* staff is not accurate. The jets did not emit puffs of smoke, but were added as an explanatory emphasis.

(Loren E. Gross, *UFOs: A History: volume 1: July 1947-December 1948*; p.28)

Hypotheses

Reconnaissance drone / RPV

Specifically, Let's take the motion of the trees as the critical observation. It points to helicopter blade downdraft. The circular shape results from visual profile of rapid rotors rather than actual material construction.

Little noise: drones are built to be quiet.

Sense of it riding the contours, thus plausibly regarded as intelligently guided.

Blue colour: proper camouflage colouring
Insignia: a consequence of rotor angle, sun reflection, and spin; possibly lines painted on the blades.

Size: 20 x 10 x 10 feet probably points to instrumental nature rather than piloted vehicle -may have been smaller and size overestimate contributes to error of speed.

The clear exhaust might be heat from rotor engine.

Query: Them or US?

Pro Them: Snake River canyon has Hanford facility downstream and a drone could be scouting dams for weaknesses that could be bombed in wartime to disrupt water traffic to and from the facility.

Con: The area wasn't restricted and could be explored at leisure by renting local aircraft or even hiking and camping expeditions. No real need for a camouflaged spy device.

Pro Us: It might be a good location for testing a reconnaissance drone in rugged terrain. The distance is within touring distance of Seattle aircraft construction industry and might be a place known to local employees as ideal for camping or fishing and possibly similar to real conditions they might run into in using the device, i.e. a mountainous region analogous to Korea, the Alps (another European war was a

plausible eventuality), etc. This particular locale probably enough out of the way to draw little attention as not a park drawing a tourist trade.

Con: Not sure there *is* a compelling downside, apart from there being probably places closer to aviation plants than this.

Helicopters were somewhat new in this period, but suspect some film news shorts had to have shown them in theatre by this date. Could fast rotor spin be unfamiliar enough to be a source of confusion? Fast blades can create appearance of solidity, but we intuitively know better from experiences of seeing them rev-up from standstill. In 1947, though, how well was this known?

The obvious and probably correct objection is that this was beyond the state-of-the-art of 1947 radio-controlled devices. Helicopters are tricky enough to control when you are inside of one. Doing it from a distance and travelling quickly over a canyon bottom with real world air currents would be remarkable indeed and it is not clear anybody would be even trying it when small planes would do aerial photography probably well-enough. It would be quite experimental and would the military foot the bill for it? Hard to say.

Other Notions

1) A kite being towed by raft downstream ("the machine coming down the canyon heading from east to west" would follow river) with the tree stuff just an accidental matter of a normal clear-air downdraft. Fitting this to testimony requires not seeing the line in full daylight, the boys missing seeing the raft, and the side profile being completely wrong. Perhaps not impossible, but this is difficult to buy as probable.

2) A rare large bird seen at an unfamiliar angle, perhaps a blue heron or other workable alternative. The main points favouring this are the soaring trajectory - fast and reacting to contours; the spine insignia may literally be the spine of the bird including neck; the absence of noise save a swish might also be considered relevant. Against this, the boys reported the clear exhaust. One might put the saucer image shape and jet pods down to cultural contamination, but the red glow and transparent exhaust detailing seem a bit too much for this notion. And, again, the tree motions would have to be relegated to accidental chance.

3) Let's be creative. Imagine a temperature inversion sufficient to create a reflecting boundary layer just above the heads of Urie and the boys. A burst of clear air turbulence drops down yielding the tree motion. The downdraft hits the layer and creates a ripple that propagates across it. The wave nudges the

boundary layer to an angle that allows it to reflect a bead of blue sky along the ripple much as a bead of sunlight can be reflected off a water ripple. This seems superficially plausible and maybe even attractive on a synthetic level in how it inverts cause-effect. The saucer does not create the downdraft; the downdraft causes the saucer. While I suspect a creative theorist could build a plausible model from tinkering with variations of these dynamic elements, one large objection could probably not be suppressed: there would probably be a much larger area of optical distortion showing the whole ripple, not just the bead. We probably don't need to add that there would be emotional resistance due to previous over-use and misuse of mirage theory by people like Stuart Campbell and Donald Menzel. It would a VERY tough sell despite the attractive features. Still, compared to the ETH, this probably rates as slightly more imaginable.

4) The guy just wants to get his name in the paper and the kids are confederates. There is no external evidence for this, but the internal problems and absence of compellingly identical saucer sightings still favours this over the assumption of extraterrestrial origins. And let's not forget, nobody was likely pressing them for a confession back in 1947.

ETH?

Extraterrestrial origin is doubtful on familiar point of absence of motive - why here? Snake River would have tourist interest; but this idea is undercut by the instrumental aspects of the craft - specifically, the too-small size and absence of windows. No particular strategic value is in evidence at this particular locale like a military base or nuclear weapons facility. The same caveats against Soviet origin adhere to using the ETH. Reconnaissance could be done by other means, including, for aliens, more inconspicuous means like bird-bots, bug-bots, orbital surveillance, and so forth. What's the point of such a craft at such a place and why does it look too different? Why is there turbulence at the tree-tops when other alien crafts are notably propelled more magically? Always, there are troubles never noticed by the advocates in their accounts

Other thoughts:

The observation being silhouetted against the canyon walls gives a firm limit on the distance estimate, a notable virtue.

The fact that Urie denied the object spun, yet the trees below did is an interesting discrimination and one you would resist accepting of a hoaxer who would surely prefer a spinning saucer to spin the tree-tops.

The admission of fear and uneasiness is unusual for a 1947 report.

The fear and uneasiness expressed again undercuts idea of saucers = mandalas.

The 'saucer-jet' label given by the newswriter reflects again this period's majority assumption of saucers as terrestrial secret weapons. Jet propulsion was a common feature of crafts in the early period, say, 1940s-70s.

The blue colour camouflage needs emphasis as an indication of intent of secrecy. As the agent notes reported, Urie felt that only the fact it was silhouetted against the far canyon wall gave the game away. If hoax, Urie was intending the device be read as a secret device. The swish noise reinforces the presumption, the device itself makes no motor sound, but the movement of air was unavoidable.

Short bibliographical note

Present:

Gerald Heard's *Is Another World Watching*, p. 92

Aimé Michel, *Truth About Flying Saucers Pyramid*, 1956/1967, pp. 33-4

Ron Story, *Encyclopedia of UFOs* 1980, Snake River Canyon entry, pp. 337-8.

Jenny Randles, *UFO Reality* Robert Hale, 1983, pp. 93, 95.

David Ritchie, *UFOs: A Definitive Guide* MJF, 1994, p. 211.

Peter Brookesmith, *UFOs: The Complete Sightings*, Barnes & Noble, 1995, p. 47.

Michael D. Hall & Wendy A. Connors, *Alfred Loedding & the Great Flying Saucer Wave of 1947*, Rose, 1998, p. 106

Absent:

Wilkins books

Lorenzen books

Menzel's books

Lloyd Mallan, *Official Guide to UFOs*

NICAP's *UFO Evidence*

David Jacobs, *UFO Controversy in America*

Margaret Sachs, *UFO Encyclopedia* Perigee, 1980

Hilary Evans, *The Evidence for UFOs*

Curtis Peebles, *Watch the Skies*

J. Clark's *UFO Book*

Huyghe & Stacy, *Field Guide to UFOs*

Michael Heseman, *UFOs: A Secret History*

Story's *Encyclopedia of Extraterrestrial Encounters*

Alan Baker, *Encyclopedia of Alien Encounters*

Trivia notes:

Bruce Maccabee's Research Site includes a page debunking Hynek's atmospheric eddy idea. This is in a section titled "Prosaic

Explanations: The Failure Of UFO

Skepticism." This strongly smacks of beating a dead horse as he notes Hynek had repudiated the idea. It is also interesting that while accepted by Blue Book officials, according to Hynek, I don't recall this idea ever being

discussed, let alone accepted by debunkers or sceptics. The case simply never came up enough to bother. Maccabee himself cites no examples of sceptics buying into it so scepticism in this instance was admirably self-correcting. After all, there is no shame in simply thinking up an explanation. The trouble comes when you do it either zealously or intransigently - here, obviously, not at issue.

On a website devoted to Idaho UFO sightings you should read this:

1947-08-13; Twin Falls, ID

Residents of Twin Falls observed a slow UFO, of blue colour, flying just over the treetops. Witnesses were amazed that the thrust emitted by the object could bend the treetops below it.

Comment: Slow, it was not and there was no expression of amazement over the thrust by the witnesses themselves, if the primary documents are the standard of proof. This is inference and arguable given Urie's focus on there being a s-w-i-s-h sound. Is that a thrust sound?

On the Supernatural World website: UFOs : Sightings & Landings

Posted by Brendan Kilmartin. 100 Years of UFO Landings: 1868 - 1967 Aug. 13, 1947 Twin Falls, Snake River Canyon (Idaho). Two boys 1300 and their father saw a sky-blue object 100 m away and 25 m above ground. Treetops under it were spinning wildly, although the object itself did not spin. It made a swishing sound. Shape: inverted plate, 7 m diameter and 3.5 m thick. There was a red flame on one side of the top. (ATIC) Error: not Snake River, but Snake River. And why is this in a list of UFO LANDINGS?

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LITERARY CRITICISM

Reviews by

Martin S. Kottmeyer

Ron Miller & Frederick C. Durant III, *The Art of Chesley Bonestell*, PaperTiger, 2001.

Chesley Bonestell was indisputably the master of his domain, space art. That is, he was the one name people thought of when you thought of astronomical art and the illustrating of future space flight. His work was simply beautiful and conveyed the majesty of space. This book is both a large collection of his art and a full biography of his life and career. Though he is remembered most for his space art, he had a varied career that began in architectural design and illustration. He did matte-work on a fair number of films. A few may know of his connection to certain science fiction films, but he also provided images of mansions and famous buildings for a fair number of films like *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Citizen Kane*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, and *The Fountainhead*. Toward the end of his life he also did a comprehensive history of Spanish missions in the region of California.

The book does a fine job of documenting Bonestell's importance in generating interest in going into space in the 1950s by a campaign of popularising the work of rocket designers, notably Werner von Braun. He was a stickler for accuracy in these matters and was infamous in asking many questions and giving thoughtful criticism. Bonestell generally maintained high standards in his astronomical work, but even he fell prey to the occasional error of judgment. Famously, his images of the moon had the landscape far too craggy than it turned out to be. The authors discuss the

problem fully and note that a famous astronomical illustrator Rudaux had worked out the truth decades before Surveyor and Apollo got there. A careful appreciation of the edge of the Moon against space showed the landscape was gently rolling. The impression of cragginess resulted from shadows at low-sun angles along the terminator. Bonestell may have been aware of this, but retained the cragginess as a matter of convention from prior science art. It 'seemed' right for the moon to look that way and made it a more attractive target for exploration; volcanic peaks having a rugged appeal that rolling hills do not.

Bonestell also retained canals in his images of Mars long after expert opinion had determined their illusory character. They also had romantic appeal. He also had volcanic features on Martian moons where he had to certainly be aware they were impossible, simply because they form a lovely frame to the disc of Mars. Aesthetic preferences crept in often, but even so, he did have standards and was often critical of the lower scientific accuracy of most, but not all, space artists that sprang up in his shadow.

There is little doubt this is the definitive book on Bonestell, the one that will stand the test of time as having everything there is to know about him, presenting his work in the finest way, and giving the fullest and most insightful commentary about his art. It is also a simply gorgeous art gallery, having what appears to be over three hundred of his works on display. Full praise to everybody involved in this masterpiece.

Lee Quinby, *Anti-Apocalypse: Exercises in Genealogical Criticism*, University of Minnesota, 1994

Lee Quinby, *Millennial Seduction: a skeptic confronts apocalyptic culture*, Cornell, 1999

I feel strangely conflicted by these writings of Lee Quinby. We both share a degree of interest in the subject of how pervasive apocalyptic themes are in the culture. We also both deeply reject their ultimate validity and value. People should not believe such nonsense, if only because it has shown such a consistent pattern of failure and because anybody employing such a premise in their dealings with the real world must be making major mistakes. Yet I have major problems with these books. For one thing, considering how much material there is that can be discussed concerning apocalyptic; a lot of the books actually have little to do with the topic. They are weighted down with long discussions of feminist politics and the diversity of feminist thought. *Anti-Apocalypse* is heavily into Foucaultian obsessions. It has a discussion of the implicit messages of blue jeans advertising which might be enjoyable to

academic tastes, but seems terribly digressive and irrelevant if you have bought the book on the attraction of the title. *Millennial Seduction* similarly groans with academic jargon and strays into themes like the sexuality of Thoreau and an appreciation of *Angels in America*. The books seem incredibly unfocused.

One thing that bothers me is that both books take the matter of apocalypse's ties to masculine evils and hatred and intolerance and oppression as somehow self-evident. I am inclined to accept that there is a correlation and surely the more hard-ass versions of Christianity tend to emphasize apocalypse. But is it really the idea of apocalypse that leads to these evils? If we could selectively battle down manifestations of apocalyptic thought and let other premises of Christianity stand, would we really see these things fall away? My own suspicion is that hard-ass dogmatists tend to have more brittle psychologies and the attendant breakdowns are what yields feelings of imminent cataclysm. One needs to combat such notions as the inherently sinful nature of one's self and various premises like a vengeful God, magical sacrifice to display submission and win God's blessings, redemption via zealotry and pious acts, and other religious logic. Apocalypse, in this view, is a symptom of a larger problem rather than the big problem itself. I do not deny Apocalyptic belief and logic leads to problems of its own, but we don't really see this properly demonstrated in these books.

Part of *Millennial Seduction* is given over to a discussion of the sexual politics of apocalypse. She sees an advocacy of chastity among such people. The main object on display is a dissection of the Promise-Keepers movement. Here, the problem of logic is almost paramount. If you truly believed the world was near its end, wouldn't the more natural response be promiscuity and a feeling that there will be no lasting consequences and no concern about children you must invest in for the rest of time? Chastity is being advocated more out of a fear of a God who is glaring down at sinful iniquity.

That said, she does make useful insights and her coda on the Waco tragedy in *Anti-apocalypse*, in particular, is relevant and valid enough to merit attention. Also, I confess that when she moves into a more auto-biographical mode of writing I find myself more drawn into her thinking. In *Millennial Seduction*, this is when we get her personal reactions to discovering that the author of Revelations had a 'secretary,' [my label] named Prochorus who, though generally unknown, is revered in Greek Orthodoxy. She also relates her experiences surrounding her first sky-dive. But such moments are exceptions amid the theoretical bluster. Blessedly, both books are short, so the annoyance factor is at least not compounded by length.

Jeff Greenwald, *Future Perfect: How Star Trek Conquered Planet Earth*, Viking, 1998

What does Star Trek mean to people? Greenwald is on a quest to find the answer to that riddle and, no surprise, he gets different replies depending on the person. Trek is very popular among space enthusiasts and JPL scientists. Many people enjoy taking up the Klingon ethos - clubs of them existing now in Germany and Scotland. Trek fandoms have sprouted up in places as diverse as Japan, South Africa, and Hungary. This conquest is not universal, however. Greenwald had trouble finding anything like organized fandom in India. Curiously, though, he does find a fan among Tibetan monks and he is able to discuss Trek, at least the original series, with the Dalai Lama. His quest takes him before a number of actors made famous by the various Trek series: Leonard Nimoy, Kate Mulgrew, Michael Dorn, among others. He also seeks audiences with Arthur Clarke and Kurt Vonnegut. He pals around with Brannon Braga and Ron Moore, writer-producers heading the current franchise, to get their take on the Trek phenomenon.

Ultimately, for some, the Trek mythos is just great story-telling. For others it is optimism for the future; a plausible utopia. Others see it as extended families, playing by new rules, exploring better identities. Greenwald's is a fun book, with lots of personal anecdotes and travel adventures well-told. It's not for people looking for episode guides and long discussions of the stories themselves. It is the phenomenon swirling around Trek that Greenwald is exploring here. The book is also peppered with clippings of how Trek is ubiquitous in the culture - Camille Paglia raves over Seven of Nine's fashions, Jewish scholars worry over how Ferengis perpetuate old stereotypes. Top Ten Signs You've Watched Too Much Star Trek; a page from long-running argument over whether Kirk is better than Picard.

Recommended as more fun than the general run of Trek literature.

Morris Berman, *The Twilight of American Culture*, WW Norton, 2000

Another of those works we all see from time to time that looks at various signs in the environment and pronounces the fall of civilization is nigh. Berman is more reasonable than most. He sees some of the contradictory data and he has a long enough perspective to recognize any fall is part of an oscillatory process. Babylon fell, Rome fell, the Aztecs and Mayans fell, but life goes on and surges back in another form at a later date. The signs, for Berman, are increasing economic inequality of the rich and poor, forms of illiteracy and irrationality on the increase. These were present in other declines at an

early stage we are told.

However, there are those annoying counter-indicators like continuing technological progress, increasing population size. People aren't dying off yet from famine and starvation. Buildings aren't being abandoned to the jungle overgrowth. Barbarians aren't invading from the north to sack and plunder the remnants. So, we are a fair ways off from dire fates or even major inconvenience. The inequality thing, to be sure, is quite immoral and we really *should* see some of that money spread around more, but as people are getting dumber, perhaps it would go to waste anyways on eBay purchases of kitsch things like comic books and lava lamps instead of Great Books and home workshops. I don't really disagree that most of the bad stuff he points is bad stuff and that monastic devotion of certain ideal styles of living is a good thing, but whether this is enough to call this - our times - a Twilight is surely problematic.

Even Golden Ages like the Sixties had their gloomsters, I remember pop-environmentalist Ehrlich was proclaiming a Malthusian starvation of vast populations by the Seventies and Eighties that never came close to happening. Industrial London had their visions of genetic decline amid growing leisure. You can always find something wrong and proclaim a trend and Berman's fears are pretty anaemic compared to most. He seems especially troubled that college students don't know Robert Browning — oh, the horror, the horror...

Richard DeGrandpre, *Ritalin Nation: Rapid-Fire Culture and the Transformation of Human Consciousness*, WW Norton, 1999

The pragmatic message of this book is to stop giving Ritalin to kids. Studies consistently show it does not improve grades and is little more than a caffeine substitute that chemically fills in for the addictive velocity of television, computer games, and the rest of Western consumer culture. Classrooms are slow and plodding places and adaptive down-shifting is a skill that must be learned.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is clearly not an organic dysfunction given the fluid nature of the definition and the inability to create a valid medical testing procedure. The basic problem is that American industrial

society is obsessed with speed and the sensations of rapid experience. Western culture conceptualises time in ways different from the rest of the world and earlier eras. We adapt to it almost too easily because there are pleasures and advantages to such accelerated life. There is a price that we pay for it, true enough, but few are unwilling to pay it.

I most enjoyed the first half of the book, which shows the history and anthropology of the speeding up of Western culture. Clearly our culture does conceptualise time differently now. One could quibble over some of the linguistic ambiguities carried forward by Grandpre from anthropological jargon and formulas, but no reader could disagree with brute truth that 20th century life is faster and more hurried than other times and places. Grandpre explores it in larger and finer detail than I have seen elsewhere.

Review by John Harney

William J. Birnes (ed.), *The UFO Magazine UFO Encyclopedia*, Pocket Books, New York, 2004, \$14.00, £9.99

Jerome Clark has drawn attention to the fact that there is scarcely an issue of *Magonia* or *Magonia Supplement* in which his name is not mentioned. However, I think he'll agree that my mention of him here is fully justified. His UFO encyclopedias are undoubtedly the best ones available, being well written, with persons and events carefully chosen and allotted space in accordance with their relative importance. The entries are also fully referenced for those who wish to undertake further research. The only serious criticism of them I have seen expressed is that they are too opinionated.

So naturally, on obtaining this book, I immediately looked for the entry for Clark, Jerome, to see what they had to say about him and his work. I looked in vain; there is no mention of him, not even in the index. Honestly, I'm not kidding! There is a possible explanation, though. The editor, William Birnes, was co-author of Lt. Col. Corso's notorious book *The Day After Roswell*. When this book was discussed on the UFO UpDates mailing list, Clark wrote some very harsh words about it. The politest thing he had to say was: "As a historian of the UFO phenomenon,

I found nothing remotely plausible in the book's pages."

Also airbrushed out of American ufology are sceptics Sheaffer and Oberg, though kindly old Uncle Phil gets a brief mention. The Supreme Commander and *Saucer Smear* are mentioned only in the acknowledgements..

A whole page is devoted to summarising the daft speculations of Zecharia Sitchin about the "Anunnaki, the extraterrestrial species that Sitchin believes first came to earth some 450,000 years ago." Edgar Cayce, "one of America's most gifted and powerful psychics", is given nearly a page because: "Edgar Cayce's nexus with ufology, it has been said, is based upon his ability to remote view, to project himself psychically onto another plane so as to receive information not necessarily accessible through the traditional five senses."

Dr James E. McDonald gets only a brief mention; in fact he is allotted no more space than Marilyn Monroe, who, according to conspiracy theorists, was murdered because her relationship with President Kennedy resulted in her "knowing too much" about UFOs. Yes, there is an entry for John F. Kennedy, which repeats the admittedly "unsubstantiated" story that he was going to make a speech revealing "the truth about Roswell". "It was the potential release of this information, some have suggested, that triggered the CIA to order Kennedy's assassination."

The editors cannot resist allotting space to persons and subjects peripheral to ufology. In the article on crop circles we learn, amongst other things, that:

"Crop circles have a strong magnetic field in and around them, which is measurable. Many also exhibit strange patterns of radioactivity in which the level at a given spot will fluctuate. According to the laws of physics, this is an impossibility since levels of radioactivity are thought to be constant."

We are also told that, when carefully measured, the geometrical designs of crop circles "are accurate to within an eighth of an inch, even if the formation is a thousand feet long." No, don't laugh - it's not funny, it's pathetic.

This book is bad enough to sell lots of copies at those crazy UFO conferences, as it tells the credulous punters what they want to hear. However, it does not take the prize for Worst UFO Encyclopedia, as the competition is pretty stiff.

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